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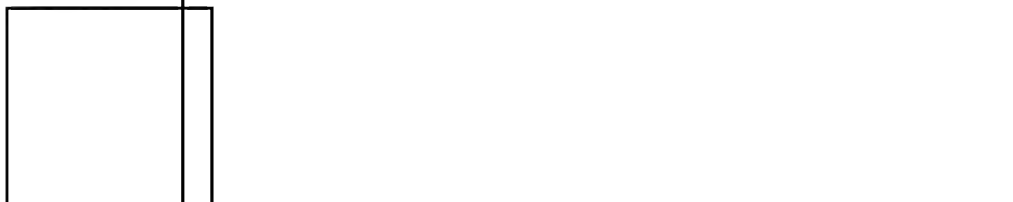
IRAN-ISRAEL: The Iranian Government has apparently reassessed its position in the Middle East situation and is moving toward a stronger pro-Arab stand.

A public statement released this week by the Iranian Foreign Ministry praises "the favorable conditions created for the restoration of peace in the Middle East as a result of the Egyptian Government's positive response" to the Jarring proposals. The statement added that the Iranian Government will "condemn" Israel if it refuses to implement the proposals.

Tehran has always publicly supported UN security council resolutions on the Middle East, even those unfavorable to Israel, but it has also maintained close ties with Tel Aviv--to the annoyance of the Arab world. The Foreign Ministry statement, the strongest anti-Israeli position yet taken by Iran, is apparently part of an effort to compel Israel to comply with the Jarring proposals or risk the loss of the best friend it has in the Middle East.

In addition, the statement might be part of an Iranian move to refurbish its image with the Arabs in the event Iran occupies the Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs. A show of pro-Arab feeling in the Middle East dispute would deprive the radical Arab states of at least some verbal ammunition.

Iran's new policy will probably have little tangible effect on Israel. Tehran could stop its oil shipments to Israel, but historically the Shah has separated politics from oil sales, and even if trouble develops between Tehran and Tel Aviv, it is highly unlikely that oil shipments would be affected.



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